

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0893

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 6659

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PROP, PINT

SUBJECT: PINOCHET COMMENTS ON PRESS FREEDOM

1. SUMMARY. CHIEF OF STATE GEN. PINOCHET CLAIMS MEDIA ARE UNDER NO UNDUE RESTRICTIONS IN CHILE; AT SAME TIME GOC CLOSES SANTIAGO RADIO STATION FOR 48 HOURS. END SUMMARY.

2. TALKING TO REPORTERS OCT 31, PINOCHET STATED: "THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN CHILE HAS THE SAME AMPLITUDE AND THE SAME LIMITATIONS AS OTHER ASPECTS OF NATIONAL LIFE." PINOCHET SAID THERE IS FREE EXPRESSION AND EVEN "CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM," ADDING THAT GOC FAITH IN EDITORS' GOOD JUDGMENT ON WHAT TO PRINT UNDER PRESENT "EMERGENCY CONDITIONS" HAD NOT BEEN MISPLACED AND HAD REMOVED NECESSITY FOR PRIOR CENSORSHIP.

3. BOTH "EL MERCURIO" AND "LA TERCERA," SANTIAGO'S TWO LEADING NEWSPAPERS, PRINTED LEAD EDITORIALS NOTING PINOCHET'S WORDS AND ACKNOWLEDGING THAT CHILEAN MEDIA DID "NECESSARILY" OPERATE UNDER CERTAIN CONSTRAINTS, BUT GENTLY SUGGESTING THAT AS TIME GOES BY THESE CONSTRAINTS CAN BE REMOVED. TERCERA DELICATELY COMPLIMENTED JUNTA MEMBERS AND "MAJORITY" MINISTERS FOR "CORDIAL" RELATIONSHIP BUT SAID SOME MID-GRADE FUNCTIONARIES "DO NOT HIDE THEIR DREAM TO HAVE A SUBDUED PRESS SUBJECT TO OFFICIAL DESIGNS."

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4. GOC, MEANWHILE, SUSPENDED SANTIAGO'S RADIO NUEVO MUNDO FOR 48 HOURS FOR BROADCASTING SPECULATION ON POSSIBLE PRICE INCREASES FOR SUGAR. "EL MAGALLANES" NEWSPAPER IN PUNTA ARENAS WAS RECENTLY ALLOWED TO RESUME PUBLICATION AFTER HAVING BEEN CLOSED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS; PAO WAS TOLD PRICE WAS PURGE SOME STAFF MEMBERS.

5. COMMENT. PINOCHET'S COMMENT ABOUT THE PRESS BEING UNDER THE SAME RESTRAINTS AS OTHER SECTORS OF CHILEAN LIFE STRIKES US AS PARTICULARLY APT. EDITORS DO HAVE SOME LIMITED ROOM TO MANEUVER, BUT THEY ARE ON A FAIRLY SHORT LEASH WHICH, AS IN NUEVO MUNDO'S CASE, IS OCCASIONALLY PULLED. CONTRARY TO WHAT PINOCHET SAID, PRIOR CENSORSHIP CONTINUES TO EXIST IN A FEW CASES.
POPPER

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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